

Minimizing risk factors for CHF

CHF is associated with several risk factors. You can minimize or eliminate some of your risk factors by making changes in your lifestyle. By controlling risk factors you can decrease your risk for developing more serious congestive heart failure.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is when a person does not get enough oxygen while sleeping. Sleep apnea occurs in 40 percent to 60 percent of congestive heart failure patients and 5 percent of the general population.

Sleep apnea symptoms:

Snoring

Choking or gasping for breath while sleeping

Feeling tired and fatigued

Falling asleep at inappropriate times during the day

Other less common symptoms are morning headaches, difficulty concentrating, depression, irritability, memory loss and sexual dysfunction.

If not treated, sleep apnea can cause high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, fatigue-related accidents and decreased quality of life.

If you have any of the above symptoms, contact your doctor to be evaluated for sleep apnea. Or contact the [Sleep Center at St. John's Hospital](#) for more information.

Stress

A diagnosis of congestive heart failure (CHF) can cause a wide range of feelings. To help you manage stress, you may find that a support group helps. Talk to your doctor or local health care agency to learn the location of a heart failure support group closest to you.

Smoking

Smoking impairs blood flow to your heart and increases your heart's workload. Stop smoking and the risk of your CHF getting worse is decreased. The Center for Living at St. John's Hospital offers smoking cessation classes. To learn more, [click here](#) or call (217) 544-LIVE (5483). You may also contact your doctor, local health agency or the local chapter of the American Lung Association to find out about smoking cessation programs in your area.

Minimizing risk factor for CHF, continued

Obesity

Being as much as 10 percent overweight increases the workload of your heart. High blood pressure, which increases your risk for CHF, is three times more common in obese persons than in normal weight persons.

If you are overweight, talk to your doctor and the dietitian about losing weight. Even a small weight loss can decrease the risk of your heart getting worse. The [Center for Metabolic and Weight Loss Surgery](#) at St. John's Hospital is available for people with obesity concerns and issues. The Center for Living also offers [weight management classes](#).

Alcohol consumption

Because alcohol can weaken your heart muscle you should talk to your doctor about your alcohol use. Recommendations about alcohol use may be based on several factors. They include, but are not limited to: history of alcoholism, pancreatitis, liver disease, uncontrolled high blood pressure and high triglyceride levels.